UNITED NATIONS

Daily Highlights

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FRIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Secretary-General recommends new and enlarged UNAVEM III to take over from current operation in Angola; Mission's mandate to be reviewed according to progress in implmenting Lusaka Protocol; says humanitarian programmes essential to peace process.

+ Special Representative Akashi calls for renewed diplomatic initiatives and political negotiations to complement cessation of hostilities agreement in Bosnia and Herzegovinia; says despite achievements ceasefire remains fragile.

+ Secretary-General says hopes generated by historic peace agreements in Middle East cannot be allowed to give way to despair; to date those agreements had not produced tangible benefits for Palestinian people.

+ Committee on Elimination of Discrimination against Women discusses proposal to hold its meetings in Geneva.

+ World Food Programme sends emergency food relief to 20,000 refugees from Sierra Leone in south-eastern Guinea as situation in Sierra Leone worsens in two-month-old civil war.

+ A five-minute time limit on statements is proposed for expected 190 speakers at three-day meeting of General Assembly to commemorate United Nations fiftieth anniversary.

+ Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for Framework on Climate Change to hold final session at United Nations Headquarters from 6 to 17 February; will take up location of secretariat and financing mechanism.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has recommeded that a new and enlarged United Nations Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM III) immediately take over from the current operation, UNAVEM II, for an initial period of twelve months. In a report to the Security Council dated 1 February, the Secretary-General said the new operation would be subject to review in the

light of progress made in the implementation of the Lusaka Protocol. He noted that under the terms of the Protocol the United Nations had been called on to play an enlarged and reinforced role and it should respond positively to that challenge. The new responsibilites would require a sizeable presence which would augment the chance for successful implementation of the Protocol.

The Secretary-General said the signing of the Lusaka Protocol last November was a critical turning point in the Angolan peace process and a manifestation of the desire of the Government and the Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), to resolve the conflict and re-establish peace through political means. He stressed that he would not hesitate to ask the Security Council to reconsider its commitments in Angola if the parties there failed to abide by the commitments they had undertaken in Lusaka. However, he was convinced that an early meeting between President Dos Santos and UNITA leader Jonas Savimbi could have a major positive impact on the whole process.

The Secretary-General noted that conditions for the delivery of humanitarian assistance had improved considerably and urged the immediate mobilization of resources required to stabilize and improve the situation of populations affected by the war, especially displaced persons. He said humanitarian programmes relating to demining, demobilization and reintegration and the resettlement of refugees were also essential for the consolidation of peace in Angola.

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The hopes generated by the historic agreements reached during 1993 and 1994 in the Middle East cannot be allowed to give way to despair, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali said today. He was addressing the opening of the 1995 session of the Committee on the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. He said it was disturbing that after nearly 17 months, those agreements had yet to produce tangible benefits in the daily lives of Palestinians. There had been deep frustration at the continuing lack of improvement in the living conditions of the occupied territories, particularly in Gaza, where unemployment was estimated to be higher than 60 percent. The expectations created by the hundreds of millions of dollars pledged by donors had not been met and he appealed for the assistance already pledged to be delivered to the Palestinian people.

The Secretary-General said acts of violence carried out by those opposed to peace were a reminder that the process of building confidence between Palestinians and Israelis was not only arduous but painful. Future negotiations would require patience, perseverance and a spirit of compromise, and must be carried out in good faith. He was mindful of the deep concern generated by Israel's decision to expand settlements in the occupied territories.

The Secretary-General noted the appointment last June of Ambassador Terje Rod Larsen as Special Coordinator to ensure the coordinated work of the United Nations system in response to the urgent needs of the Palestinian people. Ambassador Larsen had been active in strengthening the coordination between

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United Nations agencies and programmes and the donor community. Work was under way by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), the United Nations Develpment Programme (UNDP) and the International Labor Organization (ILO) to launch a massive public works programme in Gaza.

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Special Representative Yasushi Akashi today called for renewed diplomatic initiatives and political negotiations to complement the accelerated implementation of the cessation of hostilities agreement between the Bosnian government, Bosnian Serb and Bosnian Croat leaders. Describing the month old agreement as the most comprehensive and broad-based undertaking since the conflict had begun, Mr. Akashi said it set out effective measures to end the fighting and provided for the monitoring of human rights. It further opened paths to a better future for the people of Bosnia and Herzegovinia by facilitating the restoration of utilities and promoting joint economic activities.

However, despite the achievements of the last month the cease-fire remained fragile, Mr. Akashi said. Fighting continued in Bihac, where shelling and shooting was reported daily. Throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina, confrontation lines remained dangerously close, and armed forces continued to prepare for a wider conflict. He stressed that a concerted effort was needed to solve the conflict in Bihac. Liaison officers must be exchanged, the joint commission must meet on schedule, and adjustments to UNPROFOR deployments must begin. Without such immediate steps to strengthen the cease-fire agreement, the threat of renewed conflict was real. Mr. Akashi stressed that ceasefires must be nurtured and sustained by the political process. UNPROFOR had played its part in stabilizing the situation on the ground and no time should be lost in moving the political process forward.

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The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women has been discussing a proposal to hold its meetings in Geneva, where its work could be supported by the secretariat of the United Nations Centre for Human Rights. The proposal had been put forward yesterday by the Committee's working group on ways and means of improving the work of the Committee.

Discussion centred on the desire of the Committee to work alongside other human rights treaty bodies that meet in Geneva, and the need to maintain close liaison with the Division for the Advancement of Women, based in New York. Experts from Latin America and Africa emphasized that the Committee should alternate its meetings between Geneva and New York, as many governments would prefer reporting to the Committee in New York, where they had permanent diplomatic representation.

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The World Food Programme (WFP) has started to despatch over 50 metric tons of emergency relief food to cover immediate food needs of an estimated

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20,000 refugees from Sierra Leone in south-eastern Guinea. The refugees, mostly women and children, arrived in Guinea over the past few days following the rebel attack on the Sierra Leonean town of Kambia on 25 January. There are an estimated 185,000 Sierra Leonean refugees in Guinea. Another 90,000 have sought refuge in neighbouring Liberia, which is also torn by years of civil war.

Meanwhile, in Sierra Leone, the situation has worsened during the past two months, with the civil war spreading from the south-eastern region to the west and northern areas of the country, according to the WFP. Attacks and ambushes have increased on main roads and in small town, disrupting trading and transportation. The intensified civil conflict in Sierra Leone has also sparked mass displacement of war-affected populations. Over the last 12 months the number of displaced people has doubled to 600,000. No figures are available on the death toll of civilians in the affected areas, but widespread destruction and looting of property has been reported.

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A time limit must be placed on statements at the three-day meeting of the General Assembly to commemorate the United Nations fiftieth anniversary, the the Preparatory Committee for the Fiftieth Anniversary was told yesterday. Committee chairman, Richard Butler (Australia) said the time limit was necessary because of the number of speakers expected to address the Assembly. The meeting, to be held from 22 to 24 October, will be attended by a large number of heads of State and Government, and may include up to 190 speakers.

The Chairman said that in order to stay within the three days scheduled for the meeting, it would be necessary to limit statements to five minutes -- a figure favoured by most of the Committee. However, when the Committee adjourned yesterday, it had not yet agreed on the time limit, with a number of delegations favouring seven-minutes, while others preferred a "five-to-seven minute limit". The Committee is expected to decide on the matter next week.

Mr. Butler said there seemed to be general agreement that the solemn commemorative session would be held from Sunday, 22 October, to Tuesday, 24 October. A specific time-limit would be placed on statements, but each speaker might prepare and submit a whole text of their remarks for circulation and for publication in a compilation book.

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The intergovernmental Negotiating Commitee for the United Nations Framework on Climate Change Convention will hold its final session at the United Nations in New York from 6 to 17 February. It will decide on the physical location of the permanent secretariat, its institutional arrangements and the functioning of the financing mechanism for the implementation of the Convention. The Committee will finalize its decision on those and other matters which it will present to the first conference of Parties to the Convention in Berlin from 28 March to 7 April.

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The General Assembly set up the Committee in December 1990 to be supported by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO). The Committee was mandated to draft a framework convention which was adopted by 150 States in 1991. Its work at that time ran parallel to that of the Committeee preparing for the Rio de Janeiro Conference on Environment and Development (Earth Summit) held in June 1992. The Convention was opened for signature at the Summit. By June of the following year it had received the signatures of 166 countries and it came into force on 21 March 1994.

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